



ET-1051
KAB

September 9, 2004

Mr. Kenneth Blodgett
Section of Environmental Analysis
Surface Transportation Board
1925 K. Street, N.W., Suite 500
Washington, DC 20423

RE: Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement for western alignment of proposed Tongue River railroad project in southeast Montana.

Dear Mr. Blodgett:

I am writing on behalf of the Northern Plains Resource Council, a Montana grassroots family agriculture and conservation group that organizes citizens to protect clean water, family farms and ranches, and our unique quality of life. Northern Plains members live, work, and recreate in the area of the proposed Tongue River railroad project.

Our concerns about the negative impacts the proposed railroad would have on the farms, ranches, and communities in the Tongue River Valley stretch back two decades. We have fully participated in every aspect of the proposed project and will continue to do so.

In July, you reported that a Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) would be released for public scrutiny by the end of September. It is with that timeline in mind that I write you today.

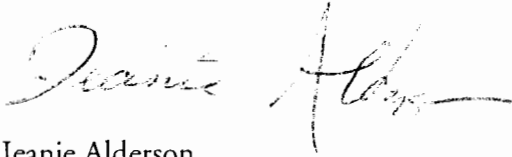
Pursuant to legal requirements under the National Environmental Policy Act and the Council of Environmental Quality (CEQ) regulations, we ask that the Surface Transportation Board (STB) provide the public with no less than 45 days to review and comment on the DSEIS. Further, we respectfully request a public hearing to be held in Lame Deer, Montana during the comment period to allow local citizens to personally share their thoughts and comments on the DSEIS.

While we will participate in the DSEIS process on the western alignment, we firmly believe that the STB should rescind its approval of Tongue River I and Tongue River II and require the Tongue River Railroad Company to submit an application for the entire 130-mile proposed route. The ranchers, farmers, and other citizens in the Tongue River Valley deserve the opportunity to fully understand the implications of the proposed project and in combination with other real projects in the area, such as coal bed methane development and coal mining.

I respectfully ask that you provide Northern Plains with a written response to the issues raised in this letter no later than close of business, Thursday, September 30, 2004.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to contact me at 406.984.6229 or call our staff person Leona Waldhausen at 406.248.1154.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jeanie Alderson". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name.

Jeanie Alderson
Bones Brothers Ranch
Birney, Montana

cc: Jack Tuholske, Attorney at Law; Gordon MacDougall, Attorney at Law; President
Geri Small, Northern Cheyenne Tribe.